

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus, comprising:
an endless belt configured to be rotatably driven;
a plurality of image carriers disposed in a moving direction of the endless belt;
a plurality of charging units, a charging unit provided for each image carrier of the plurality of image carriers and configured to uniformly charge a surface of an associated image carrier;
a plurality of exposing units, each exposing unit configured to expose an associated image carrier of the plurality of image carriers charged by the associated charging unit to form an electrostatic latent image on each image carrier of the plurality of image carriers; and
a plurality of developing units, a developing unit provided for each image carrier of the plurality of image carriers and configured to develop the electrostatic latent image on an associated image carrier with a developer of different color to form a developer image,
wherein the endless belt is configured to transfer the developer image formed on each image carrier of the plurality of image carriers to form a color image, the developing unit provided at a most upstream position with respect to the moving direction of the endless belt forms the developer image with a developer of black color, and the each developing unit is configured to be separable from the associated image carrier and detachable from the image forming apparatus, each developing unit comprising a developer supplying unit disposed to be in contact with a developer carrier and supplies onto the developer carrier while charging the developer, and
the developer of black color is configured to be more chargeable than developers of other colors.

2. (Previously Presented) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the developing unit provided at the most upstream position retrieves residual developer on the endless belt by electrically moving the residual developer.

3. (Previously Presented) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a developer charging unit that charges the developer on the endless belt in a reverse polarity to a charging polarity of the developer.

4. (Previously Presented) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 3, wherein the image forming apparatus operates in a plurality of modes including:

a normal mode in which the developer on the endless belt is charged by the developer charging unit and electrically moved to the image carrier provided at the most upstream position in a state where the image carrier provided at the most upstream position is exposed to light by the exposing unit; and

a cleaning mode in which the developer on the endless belt is charged by the developer charging unit and electrically moved to the image carrier provided at the most upstream position in a state where the image carrier provided at the most upstream position is not exposed to light by the exposing unit.

5. (Previously Presented) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a retrieval restoring unit that temporarily retrieves the developer on the endless belt and restores the retrieved developer onto the endless belt.

6. (Previously Presented) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 5, further comprising a bias generating unit that applies a bias generating a potential difference to move the developer on the endless belt to the image carrier.

7. (Previously Presented) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the charging unit is disposed to be in non-contact with the associated image carrier.

8. (Canceled)

9. (Previously Presented) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the developing unit comprises a developer carrier disposed to be in contact with the image carrier and carries the developer for forming the developer image by developing an electrostatic image on the image carrier, and the developer carrier is configured to retrieve residual developer on the image carrier.

10. (Canceled)

11. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the developing unit employs a polymerized toner as the developer.

12. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus, comprising:
an endless belt configured to be rotatably driven and to convey a recording medium;
a plurality of image carriers disposed in a moving direction of the endless belt;
a plurality of charging units, a charging unit provided for each image carrier of the plurality of image carriers and configured to uniformly charge a surface of an associated image carrier;
a plurality of exposing units, each exposing unit configured to expose an associated image carrier of the plurality of image carriers charged by the associated charging unit to form an electrostatic latent image on an associated image carrier of the plurality of image carriers;
and
a plurality of developing units, a developing unit provided for each image carrier of the plurality of image carriers and configured to develop the electrostatic latent image on an associated image carrier with a developer of different color to form a developer image,
wherein each of the plurality of image carriers transfer the developer images onto the recording medium to form a color image, and the developing unit provided at a most upstream position with respect to the moving direction of the endless belt forms the developer image with a developer of black color-, each developing unit comprising a developer

supplying unit disposed to be in contact with a developer carrier and supplies the developer onto the developer carrier while charging the developer, and

the developer of black color is configured to be more chargeable than developers of other colors.

13. (Previously Presented) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 12, wherein the developing unit provided at the most upstream position retrieves the developer on the endless belt by electrically moving residual developer.

14. (Previously Presented) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 12, further comprising a developer charging unit that charges the developer on the endless belt in a reverse polarity to a charging polarity of the developer.

15. (Previously Presented) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein the image forming apparatus operates in a plurality of modes including:

a normal mode in which the developer on the endless belt is charged by the developer charging unit and electrically moved to the image carrier provided at the most upstream position in a state where the image carrier provided at the most upstream position is exposed to light by the exposing unit; and

a cleaning mode in which the developer on the endless belt is charged by the developer charging unit and electrically moved to the image carrier provided at the most upstream position in a state where the image carrier provided at the most upstream position is not exposed to light by the exposing unit.

16. (Previously Presented) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 12, wherein the charging unit is disposed to be in non-contact with the associated image carrier.

17. (Previously Presented) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 12, wherein the developing unit is configured to be separable from the associated image carrier and detachable from the image forming apparatus.

18. (Previously Presented) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 12, wherein the developing unit comprises a developer carrier disposed to be in contact with the image carrier and carries the developer for forming the developer image by developing an electrostatic image on the image carrier, and the developer carrier is configured to retrieve the residual developer on the image carrier.

19. (Canceled)

20. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 12, wherein the developing unit employs a polymerized toner as the developer.

21. (New) The image forming apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the black developer contains more charge control agent than the other color developers.

22. (New) The image forming apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the plurality of developing units are arranged vertically and the developing unit for the black developer is at an uppermost position.

23. (New) The image forming apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the black developer contains more charge control agent than the other color developers.

24. (New) The image forming apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the plurality of developing units are arranged vertically and the developing unit for the black developer is at an uppermost position.